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Basic and continuing adult education policies

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Basic and Continuing Adult Education Policies

by Chris Duke and Heribert Hinzen for IIZ/DVV

Scope and basis of this study

This Global Monitoring Report (GMR) commissioned study reviews the role of adult basic and continuing education (ABCE) in Education for All (EFA), and the overall promotion of literacy through different policies in a global perspective. It thus addresses the fourth EFA goal adopted by the Dakar Conference:

achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

The central focus is on policies and strategies that make a difference in and for developing countries, but within a broad and inclusive context of lifelong learning that is truly global. It therefore includes links to continuing education, to development and to citizenship. Different elements in the terms of reference are reflected in the sections which follow below. The 2006 GMR, in taking literacy as its theme, also seeks to clarify its meaning and its relationship to the multiple dimensions of development, as well as considering monitoring methodologies, trends, determinants, effective policies and international commitments. Where relevant this study addresses itself also to these other dimensions.

The study is based on secondary research over recent years. This research is often brought together on the occasion of major international events that are used as benchmarking review points in the history of education and development, and for the creation or renewal of policies and objectives, strategies and targets. This cycle of global review and target-setting is itself part of the process under review.

Some specific sources are referenced below; but the paper also draws much more widely on the cumulative and documented experience of the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (IIZ/DVV) throughout its life, down to and including the most recent (63 / 2004) number of *Adult Education and Development* reporting from the 2004 Poverty Reduction and Adult Education Conference in Botswana, and including nos. 54 and 55 / 2000, on Dakar and *Education for All*.

Introduction – issues and recent steps

A comprehensive and inclusive view of basic and continuing education policies must look at the importance and need for adult literacy from different perspectives. Literacy can for example be seen as providing skills for employment; as a prerequisite or an enabling tool to further one's education; as a

moving target in the light of changing communication patterns; or as the partial fulfilment of education as a basic human right. In a recent article Oxenham takes the focus a step further: there are all kinds of reasons to provide for and participate in adult literacy, whether they are functional, in and for the workplace, or for freedom. *“What is at issue here is whether literacy (per se and abstracted from wider associations with education and training) is such a fundamental human right that, irrespective of any ‘instrumental’ development effects, the Bank should not only lend more in support of efforts to promote it, but should actually pressure some of its poorest owners/borrowers to get themselves deeper into debt for the purpose”.* (Oxenham, 2004, p. 43) And one is tempted to add, just like they do in borrowing for primary schooling, or other sectors of formal education.

The worldwide overall numbers of children and youth are still growing, but the same is true for adults and older adults; additional and better learning opportunities are needed for them, just as we need more and better schools. The dramatic changes in society and technology require constant enlargement of information and knowledge through education, learning and training at different levels, continuing and post-experience as well as basic. The individual’s capacity to learn is however very much influenced by earlier educational experiences and stages in life. It is essential to avoid a dichotomous (win-lose) conflict between the needs of children and those of older people, instead finding the necessary synergies, balance and connections.

The Delors Commission Report to UNESCO *Learning: The Treasure Within* phrased the new paradigm as a need for ‘learning throughout life’. It called attention to ‘four pillars for education as learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be’ (Delors, 1996, p. 22). The different essential dimensions are lifelong, life-wide and life-deep. The Delors Report was published in 1996, midway between the World Education Forum at Jomtien and that at Dakar which broadened the vision considerably.

The NGO sector in adult education and learning represented by the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) was invited by the Delors Commission to present its case. It did so in a very straightforward submission which included the following statements:

*The conventional notion of literacy/literate needs a thorough revision. Being able to read and write a simple statement of everyday life is not enough to prepare people to face the complexities of the modern world, much less those of the 21st century. Literacy itself is a lifelong learning process – **an ever moving target**. ... The **integration of all adult education**, including general, political, cultural and vocational education into a lifelong learning perspective is essential. We must overcome false assumptions and dichotomies ... we need to look at **new partnerships** as well as old responsibilities. Public institutions and private companies, voluntary organisations and professional associations, and initiatives in related fields have to share their experiences, and they can all give new life to adult continuing education, including research of the universities and research*

institutions. Competition and market forces must not prevent cooperation. Moreover, governments must provide constructive legislation and a framework of financial and logistical support which is conducive to the momentous tasks of the next decades which will see more adults living in this world than ever before. (ICAE, 1994, pp. 422-423)

From Jomtien to Dakar

The 1990 conference in Jomtien created a very broad definition of basic learning needs for children, youth and adults, including literacy, numeracy and problem solving as instruments for further education and learning necessary for survival and the successful management of life and work. However, implementation of the Jomtien goals via basic education policies has concentrated very much on primary schools, and therefore on children only. Even this was attempted less than half-heartedly: a major measurable target – Universal Primary Education by the year 2000 – failed drastically. It was no better for the two following goals

reduction of the adult illiteracy rate to one-half its 1990 level by the year 2000, with sufficient emphasis on female literacy

and

the expansion of provision

of basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults.

A thematic study preparing for Dakar concluded that this reduction by 50% 'has not happened in any country', and with population growth, the absolute number of illiterates has declined very little since Jomtien. (Wagner, 2000, p. 25)

An overarching goal to transform too narrow an education agenda was to overcome especially gender disparities, and all kinds of social hindrances on the way to good quality education for all. Early childhood care and education, followed by primary schools, were rightfully placed at the start and the heart of the six Dakar goals, with the declared aim of access and completion achieving good quality for all. Children's education and schooling are of free-standing importance for themselves. At the same time they correspond with the next two goals, which should as well be taken in their fullest sense and in a coherent and integrative way:

ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;

achieving 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

Coherence and integration are vital. Pulling the different strands, age levels and members of a family or community apart for target purposes may not only create artificial competition between different important elements but undermine the efforts especially for the literacy of the young and very young if it is not connected to women's, family and community learning and aspiration.

Having the learning needs of all young people and adults in focus is the logical follow-up to quality primary education for all. It means that learning of and training for life skills must be within the reach of everybody, whether or not they successfully completed the cycle of primary schooling. From a lifelong learning perspective these are of equal relevance.

The explicit Dakar goal for adult literacy is to be seen in this context. Halving adult illiteracy by 2015 is important in itself. However, the provision of *equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults* requires a system of lifelong learning, integrating general education and vocational training and re-training, social and cultural learning needs. It calls for more, and more systematic, ways to continue after literacy classes for youth and adults, for entry points from out of school courses into the formal set-up, and thus a systematic approach to value and credit learning outcomes from the diversity of non-formal education and skills training. This obviously is much more than the reduction of illiteracy.

There is this notion in the Dakar goals called *especially for women*, which has a quantitative and qualitative connotation. The case of India is helpful in both respects. The Total Literacy Campaign which started in the late 80s through the 90s revealed in their evaluations later that about 70% of the participants were women. Plenty of good reasons to join were given: from "a strong desire for learning" to "an opportunity to meet others and study collectively", and "a social space away from home ... to meet in a group to share their common experience about work, family and illness". However, there was a quite sharp critique of the content, as the curriculum materials used neither

challenged the existing division of labour nor questioned discriminatory practices against women in society. In general, the visuals and the text of the literacy primers emphasise women's domestic and reproductive role, and make their productive role in society invisible ... Concerns of men and women as protagonists also reflect stereotypical gender roles in society ... most literacy primers highlighted the ideology of domestication and failed to promote critical understanding of women's subordination in society. (Patel, 2001, pp. 356-358)

In a recent special issue of *Convergence on Education for All: Putting Adults Back in the Frame* Rogers put together a set of fresh articles looking at adult literacy from perspectives of policy and conceptual, regional and international issues. In his editorial *EFA and Adult Learning* he identifies an interesting set of paradigm shifts over the years when it comes to programming and funding which for him has meant that

- **EFA becomes EFAC (Education for All Children)**
- **EFAC becomes SFAC (Schooling for All Children)**
- **SFAC Becomes SFA (Schooling for Adults)**
- **New Approaches to EFAA (Education for All Adults)**

and in concluding he argues for a wide range of changes in the overall approach to learning and education:

It may be that the linking of adult learning with EFA has been detrimental to adult learners, for it has reinforced the schooling model of adult learning, So, while we urge EFA to take seriously the claims of adults to educational provision, we do not mean providing the same education as children receive. We mean a new education, breaking free of the schooling model, freeing the participants to learn what they want when they want, where they want and for as long as they want – real participatory learning, as is their human right. (Rogers, 2004, p. 11)

The Evolution of Understandings, Policies and Strategies over Recent Decades

Literacy in Adult Basic Education (ABE)

Literacy has frequently been a zone of heated and often ideological debates. The *eradication of illiteracy* has been seen as an illusion while somehow stigmatising people who were unable to read, write and count. This discrimination has occurred irrespective of whether it is an oral or a written culture. Becoming literate, and the underlying values and assumptions, were taken from the contexts of generally literate societies. The post-literacy phase was commonly recognised as a danger time for participating learners who will quickly lose their literacy skills if there is then nothing to read or write, and no reason to use these skills. Today, wider concepts of literacy – or rather literacies – in changing societies, contexts and communication systems have gained ground. The idea of literacy as a *moving target* is common today, but only came into general awareness about two decades ago. Functional literacy has been used for longer, but the extension into IT literacy and different forms and sense of ‘social’ or ‘civic’ literacy are also quite new.

One such set of contexts has to do with the notion of livelihoods. This has always been a central strand of literacy policies, and a source of concern by those who wish to see equalisation of opportunity and policies across North and South rather than ABE for developing countries and a richer menu for the North.

However, functionality in this specific mainly economic and ‘labour market’ sense has become if anything more salient in recent times, featuring in much current and recent literature. The idea that the best way of acquiring literacy is in ways that are economically useful, and therefore motivating, has become more central even than before. This is the case in many of the literacy projects run in Ethiopia, a country with nearly 45% of the population being absolutely poor. Both the community based livelihoods skills training program at community skill training centres (EXPRO) as well as the functional adult literacy (FAL) programs that the Women Association of Tigray (WAT) and the Amhara Women Association (AWA) are implementing directly aim at the improvement of livelihood and thus the reduction of poverty. (Sandhaas, 2005; www.iiz-dvv.de)

Young people and adults need skills to earn a living, and to maintain or manage their livelihoods. Yet with almost a billion people in the world who are not literate we must appreciate that they manage their daily survival without literacy skills. We assume they would do better if they could read and write. Appreciating their ‘survival management’ is however suspected as possibly weakening a strong policy commitment towards literacy for all, with special attention to those most in need. However, important questions remain to be addressed, such as *how do they learn not being literate?* And even *how much more will they have to learn without being literate?* There is a practically oriented research agenda here that the EFA GMR might now consider, as the meaning and understanding of ‘literacy’ widens and varies, and as we come to realise the full force of ‘cultural diversity’ and that one size does not fit all.

In particular, we may need to learn much more about the ways in which learning and its application are successful in non-literate and mixed or part-literate ways – that is, learn more about ‘indigenous’ skills and wisdom. Claims about this have frequently been made from projects working in communities which have (still) predominantly oral cultures, despite the rapid processes of globalisation and IT-based communication. The different Indian communities and cultures in Mexico are one such example. Therefore the need is for some sort of *intercultural literacy*, based on specific linguistic research with participation of the prospective learners. (Klesing-Rempel, 2002)

Youth and adults can and do learn about health and nutrition, agriculture and their environment, technical and mechanical skills before or without any literacy training. More should be known about the associated psychological and pedagogical processes. They could inform on implications relevant for organisational and structural matters when moving from basic to continuing education, be they for children, youth or adults.

A recent study documented and critically analysed programmes that were doing mainly literacy with an additional livelihood component, compared with those which were foremost on skills training for better livelihoods, while incorporating literacy work. Only one out of the many valuable findings and recommendations is quoted here, as it clarifies a key question:

“Deriving literacy/numeracy content from livelihood skills and integrating it with livelihood training from the very start seems more promising than either running the two components parallel with each other or using standard literacy materials to prepare people to train for livelihoods.” (Oxenham et. al., 2002, p. 3)

The report shows at the same time how difficult this approach may be in its implementation as it is often accepted as a principle, but rarely found in respective programmes. However, to put this into practice would help work in education and training with youth and adults considerably. To transfer it into educational policy could even transform realities in schools.

Demanding more support for adult literacy should in no way be misinterpreted as giving less importance to basic schooling. It is more a call for a necessary and better balance:

Clearly, the false dichotomy between initial schooling and adult basic education still prevails, in full contradiction to the synergy of lifelong learning promoted by the Delors report. Our Report does not imply that the hundreds of millions of women and men who did not have access to literacy and did not have the opportunity to acquire, through organized learning, communication and technical skills, are ignorant and uninformed about their realities. This Report does want to suggest, however, that all these women and men have the fundamental right to organized learning opportunities in order to acquire the basic skills required for active participation in literate societies. If this does not happen, it means that their right to organized education has been, as Sergio Haddad wrote, ‘violated’. Regrettably, the absolute priority of adult basic education is still largely unmet. (ICAE, 2003, p. 125)

Continuing Adult Education within Lifelong Learning

Throughout the deliberations at CONFINTEA V, the UNESCO World conference in Hamburg on adult education in 1997, there was a strong theme not to confuse adult education with lifelong learning. *Lifelong* covers learning from the cradle to the grave, whereas the term *adult* clearly denotes the long period after youth. It needs no further argument that this is the longest phase in life, and there is no convincing reason that learning does or should be stopped at a certain time. The term *basic education* (in families, schools or other institutions) describes a starting point, a solid base or foundation, on which continuation can and must be built. The Hamburg *Declaration on the Right to Learn* (CONFINTEA V, 1997, pp. 253-5) stated that

Adult learning encompasses both formal and continuing education, non-formal learning and the spectrum of informal and incidental learning available in a multi-cultural learning society, where theory- and practice-based approaches are recognized.

It is essential that the recognition of the right to education throughout life should be accompanied by measures to create the conditions required to exercise this right.

Lately, a change in the language and to some extent of paradigm from *education* to *learning* has become almost universal. Box 1 is an interesting example and also an exception. Here *lifelong education* is used rather than the normal *lifelong learning*, in drawing together many key features of this new paradigm, including the 'spill-over' of education from the classroom of young and older learners into the workplace and other 'non-teacher' community settings. The choice of 'education' in this South African passage is a good challenge. It should force us to accept that 'education' cannot any longer be the exclusive preserve and even monopoly of Ministry of Education portfolios and the teaching profession. Or rather, that the achievement of EFA goals, especially Goal (iv), is not possible without systematic cooperation of the different government departments, institutions and organisations concerned with education and training, far beyond approaches looking at the school system only.

Box 1

Towards a Definition of Lifelong Education – A Southern African Perspective

Lifelong education is a comprehensive and visionary concept which includes formal, non-formal and informal learning throughout the lifespan of an individual to attain the fullest possible development in personal, social and vocational and professional life. It views education in its totality, and includes learning that occurs at home, school, community and workplace, and through mass media and other situations and structures for acquiring and enhancing knowledge, skills and attitudes.

No country has as yet achieved this full goal of a lifelong learning system and it remains a visionary call for an open learning society, operating through a multiplicity of educational networks. A key purpose of lifelong learning is democratic citizenship, connecting individuals and groups to the structures of social, political and economic activity in both local and global contexts.

Lifelong education builds on and affects all existing educational providers, and extends beyond the formal educational providers to encompass all bodies and individuals involved in learning activities.

Lifelong education means enabling people to learn at different times, in different ways, for different purposes at various stages of their lives and careers. Lifelong education is concerned with providing learning opportunities throughout life (and hence pays special attention to all forms of adult and continuing education), while developing lifelong learners (and hence must address the foundations young people receive in formal education for engaging in lifelong learning).

Lifelong education, in response to the constantly changing conditions of modern life, must lead to the systematic acquisition, renewal, upgrading and completion of knowledge, skills and attitudes, as required by the changes.

In contexts where large numbers of adults are illiterate or lacking a basic education the focus of lifelong education activities may well be largely upon providing the foundations for lifelong learning to such disadvantaged or marginalised sectors of society.

Southern African Development Community (SADC) Technical Committee on Lifelong Education and Training, in: Aitchison, 2003, p.161

The paradigm shift prefigured from at least the time of the Faure report in 1972 has brought forward all kinds of new and different approaches. Some try to make learning more relevant, effective and better motivated by taking it into different settings and using new methods. Others reflect the understanding that learning is a shared property and a social process at levels 'above' the individual. Hence the search for learning communities, learning cities, regions and countries, and for learning organisations, even learning festivals. These have in common that the learner rather than the educational institution is at the centre, and that learning cannot be confined just to traditional educational establishments but occurs throughout society.

There is a big gap between these newer understandings, more worked up and applied in the North than in the developing countries, and the more familiar target-driven and in a sense reductionist approaches to literacy still manifest in EFA. The 4th EFA goal however does imply that these understandings need to be translated into policy and practice, as much in the developing world as in the North. As is common, there are important philosophical differences underpinning these issues that have hampered understanding and are better made as clear as possible.

Again on an ideological level, there was for a long time – and perhaps still is – another debate, referred to above. This argues for and against the view that basic education is for the poor (and the South), and lifelong learning for the rich (and the North).

A recent very profound study for the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) claims that lifelong learning

“must be adopted as a paradigm for all countries, as a horizon and as an active principle for (re)shaping teaching (education/training) and learning systems, institutions, policies and programs. Accepting dual standards and a dual education agenda...means consolidating and deepening, rather than reducing, the gap between North and South”. (Torres, 2003, pp. 144-145)

Part of the 2006 GMR will require recognising the ways that literacy (in its changing scope and meaning) is a policy issue for all societies, North and South, just as extremes of wealth and poverty occur within and between all societies. ABE is vital in the most wealthy societies. Lifelong learning is coming to be seen as a basic right. It is becoming a policy issue for the least as well as the most wealthy societies. It is a new and recent, interest, accordingly, of the World Bank as well as of many professional bodies and other INGOs.

The development of lifelong learning policies has been extremely interesting in the European Union over the last few years. Now, lifelong learning is seen as the paradigm for all education, and training on all levels, and is of paramount importance for both citizenship and employability. In a first major document *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, there were six key messages, starting off with the 'new basic skills for all' (IT skills, foreign languages, etc.) and stating clearly that this 'new' does not imply that the *traditional basic skills of literacy and numeracy are no longer important* (Commission of the European Communities, 2000, p. 10). The *Memorandum* was widely circulated and debated within Governments, civil society, and professionals, and resulted in a *Communication on A European Area of Lifelong Learning* by the EU Commission, from which we quote in Box 2.

Box 2

What is lifelong learning? - A European Union Perspective

Responses to the consultation on the Memorandum called for a broad definition of lifelong learning that is not limited to a purely economic outlook or just to learning for adults. In addition to the emphasis it places on learning from pre-school to post-retirement, lifelong learning should encompass the whole spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning. The consultation also highlighted the objectives of learning, including active citizenship, personal fulfilment and social inclusion, as well as employment-related aspects. The principles which underpin lifelong learning and guide its effective implementation emphasise the centrality of the learner, the importance of equal opportunities and the quality and relevance of learning opportunities...

A partnership approach is stipulated as the first building block. All relevant actors, in and outside the formal systems, must collaborate for strategies to work 'on the ground'. Gaining insight into the needs of the learner, or the potential learner, along with learning needs of organisations, communities, wider society and the labour market is the next step. Adequate re-sourcing, in terms of financing and the effective and transparent allocation of resources, can then be addressed. The analysis then proceeds to how to match learning opportunities to learners' needs and interests and how to facilitate access by developing the supply side to enable learning by anyone, anywhere, at any time. There is a clear need here for the formal sector to recognise and value non-formal and informal learning. Creating a culture of learning depends ultimately on increasing learning opportunities, raising participation levels and stimulating demand for learning. Finally, mechanisms for quality assurance, evaluation and monitoring are suggested, with a view to striving for excellence on an ongoing basis...

The European Councils in Lisbon and Stockholm underlined the importance of improving basic skills through adequate education and lifelong learning policies. Basic skills include the foundation skills of reading, writing and mathematics, as well as learning to learn and the new skills set out at Lisbon – IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship, social skills. The consultation feedback underlined the fundamental importance of basic skills acquisition in allowing people to engage in further learning and as a basis for personal fulfilment, active citizenship and employability, particularly given the demands of the developing knowledge-based society. The foundations for lifelong learning must be provided by Governments through compulsory schooling, but adults who left school with ongoing literacy, numeracy and other basic skills needs should

also be encouraged to participate in compensatory learning.

European Communities: A European Area of Lifelong Learning, 2002, pp. 10, 40

It was in 2002, during a major Regional Conference in Sofia on *Lifelong Learning in Europe: Moving towards EFA Goals and CONFINTEA V Agenda*, that an attempt was made to build bridges between the priorities and challenges of having basic education for all and lifelong learning for a few. At the same time it was opposed to narrowing down continuing education for adults to a much needed continuing re-training of the labour force only, and the Director-General for Education and Culture in the European Commission stated: "...if I am talking about LLL from a European Union point of view, it is not just 'employment', it is not just 'the economy', it is very much 'society', it is very much 'people'." And basic skills are more than reading, writing and arithmetic, it also includes social skills and ICTs, and some even want to add entrepreneurship. (Van der Pas, 2003, pp. 8, 12)

However, turning back to the realities in the majority of the countries of the South within a globalising world, the argument that a gender perspective should have a much stronger standing in all those new policy developments is brought forward. A set of case studies from different countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe on *Educational Watch on Gender and Education* shows very clearly that there is still a very long way to go; at the same time the findings support the need to transform the limited formal education system into a framework of integrated lifelong learning:

*"The endemic problem of low educational level of women and men from popular sectors and, in particular, of young and adults who are excluded from the education system structure, cannot be simply resolved with educational reforms of the main education system. Within a context of growing poverty and social exclusion, women constitute a particularly affected group. Poverty feminization is a strong trend. There is a growing population of women who are the sole heads of the house and who must simultaneously fight for family sustenance and protection. Girls' drop-out rates are higher in average which shows the persistence of several gender discriminations. These discriminations still have a strong cultural and practical weight which affects women's possibilities of employment, promotion and remuneration. **Active policies for the reconstruction of adult education in the context of permanent education,** are required. This context refers to a global view of education where school and other existing educational resources are included. The challenge is to strengthen and coordinate a network of formal, non-formal and informal education opportunities, which allows a constant and consistent flow for the obtention [sic] of certificates of the same quality, which enable the access to the social, political and economic world."* (Education in Motion, 1999, p. 17)

Three Sectors – the Role of the Public and Private Sectors, and of Civil Society

There is a long and often uncomfortable history of partnership between public and other sectors. In literacy and ABE this has tended to be between the State and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – the voluntary sector – rather than principally the private sector. There have however long been some large, partly State-subsidised or partnership, programmes of workplace education and training in private as well as public organisations. Mostly these are for ABE, literacy, language and skills acquisition, especially where there are large populations of migrants and other new or 'guest' workers. The policy may be both economic and social in its intentions.

Relations between NGOs and the State for delivering literacy and ABE programmes have been important in many countries especially of the developing world. There are frequent political and social tensions and conflict: some NGOs, often now referred to as civil society or the third sector, play a critical and even oppositional role, challenging the State from a basis of value and principle in terms of equity and redistribution. At the other end of a spectrum NGOs may come to occupy an entirely apolitical part as deliverers of services that critics believe are the job of the State, thereby it appears colluding in rather than challenging undesirable practices. This has been an acute problem in the North no less than the South, especially where such 'service delivery substitution' funds become necessary to the survival of the voluntary body. There is thus a spectrum: from old-fashioned apolitical charity type work to extreme 'oppositionism', informed perhaps for example by a Marxist value base or more commonly by Freirean pedagogy.

There is a more recent and near-universal trend favouring partnership, both between public sector and private bodies and between the public sector and what is now usually called the third sector or civil society. The change of terms reflects a deeper appreciation of the complexity of governance and is highly relevant to reaching the more marginalised and impoverished who are outside the mainstream of middle class society and even in many developing countries of the formal cash economy. Public-private partnerships are now making an appearance as a significant initiative in linking literacy to workplace based learning, and so directly to economic goals, whether of rural communities through small-scale enterprises or in raising skill levels and productivity of larger enterprises and even regional economies. Adult literacy and ABE are thus reflecting a wider tendency favouring devolution, and two or three way partnerships.

Relevant results of recent studies on managing and outsourcing larger adult literacy programmes reveal important lessons learned. The first one to mention here is *Managing Public-Private Partnership. Lessons from Literacy Education in Senegal* in which one of the concluding statements says:

The outsourcing – or partnership – approach is a flexible method for implementation that can meet the changing needs for non-formal education where a government does not wish to make heavy long-term investments in public structures for delivery of literacy courses. The approach can facilitate subproject implementation that meets the demand in individual locations; in fact each intervention can be tailored to local requirements ... the partnership approach, as its name suggests, requires direction and strong involvement by the government. Government involvement is critical on technical levels to ensure that a proper selection procedure is followed, and that the monitoring, evaluation, and feedback systems enhance subproject effectiveness ... The government's involvement is crucial when it comes to policy formulation and implementation. Literacy projects based on outsourcing were successfully implemented in Senegal largely because of the government's strong commitment to the approach – and to literacy. Hence, the outsourcing approach is no substitute for public involvement... (Nordtveit, 2004, p. 45)

The second example comes from Guinea. Again, based on World Bank funding, here within an agreement on support to overall educational reform and EFA to Guinea, the outsourcing strategy is taking a slightly different way: *“In future, only applicants with a minimum of three years working and two years of literacy experience will be accepted. Applicants must prove to have the status of a national NGO. With this re-orientation, we have moved away from the Senegalese ‘faire-faire’ model, where hundreds of community based groups have won contracts. In Guinea, we will endeavour to promote quality services by a limited number of competent NGOs, which organise the learning arrangements in partnership with community-based self-help groups.”* (Hildebrand and Hinzen, 2004, p. 61) The transfer of services from Government to experienced national or regional NGOs and thereby providing needed professional support to the local level could be model to try and follow.

The subject of partnership remains sensitive, as well as promising in terms of achieving better results. More politically aware and radically inclined NGOs, deeply disappointed with lack of progress since Jomtien and now Dakar, are prone to turn away from partnership and concentrate entirely on community development and mobilisation approaches. This work may be apolitical or political in tone. In some instance however the inevitable tensions between public service and civil society sectors have been worked through into constructive partnerships which allow both parties to play to their strengths. Some such successful partnerships were featured at the international conference in Botswana in June 2004, especially the one in Uganda (www.aepr.co.bw). They offer models and a way of resolving a difficulty that has been evident at least since the early eighties when the World Bank and DVV sponsored a number of ICAE studies of different approach to using adult education, especially literacy, in efforts to combat poverty in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Duke, 1985, 1990).

These studies demonstrated the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches. Broadly speaking government-driven programmes achieved wide,

often national, reach but were shallow in impact, often with very little limited long-term effect. By contrast, non-governmental adult education programmes, often supported by quite small and time-constrained amounts of (usually North to South) aid funding, commonly achieved significant, even transformative, results using a more integrative whole-of-community approach to literacy and learning for development. However, their reach was (and is) often highly localised. There is a more constructive climate of goodwill and a desire to work across sectors in this new 'world of partnerships'. Here the challenge and opportunity is to find ways whereby the success of locally anchored 'grassroots' ventures that engage with people locally can be scaled up to regional and national levels where national governments and others committed to EFA can see and count their impact.

These issues were well demonstrated and explored in many of the prepared papers and seminar sessions at the Botswana conference. The deep philosophical and inevitably 'political' issues that they contain were sharply displayed during plenary sessions where NGO and other civil society participants took strong exception to a World Bank preference for treating private and third sectors as one sector, called private, as against the governmental or public sector side. The Conference showed how important triple sector and different forms of dual sector partnership now are to achieving lasting results from embedded adult literacy and ABE programmes, and helpfully signalled some ways that cross-sectoral partnership can be helped or hindered (*Adult Education and development* 63 and www.aepr.co.bw). .

The subject is important, both for the rise of public-private partnerships as a form of governance and programme implementation in many countries, and because of the rising influence of the voluntary or civil society sector in recent years. At the fourth Unesco Adult Education World Conference in 1985 there was a significant NGO presence but the agenda and business were government-dominated and heavily influenced by the macro-political relations of the Cold War. By the time of the fifth Conference at Hamburg in 1997 the NGO sector was an effective equal partner in deliberation and the making of resolutions. At the mid-term review in Bangkok six years later the dominant voices were with few exceptions non-governmental, and there was serious concern at the absence of so many key States which appeared to have turned away from adult education – including adult literacy – as a significant policy arena.

The further development and strengthening of partnerships across the three sectors appears as important to the 2006 GMR as is the analogous development of strategies to embed adult literacy, ABE and lifelong learning within as many portfolios as possible across the spectrum of public policy.

And this is also true for the cooperation of the three sectors on the local level. There is now a wealth of experience available especially in the Asian region, supported and documented via the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Programme for Education for All (APPEAL). Community Learning Centres (CLCs) are operating locally and combine education with community development activities, preferably

with strong participation of the people, young and old, including literacy classes and skills training, within a network of traditional and modern structures of Government and NGOs. *“In the start-up phase, CLCs need continued support from Governments at national and local levels, as well as from NGOs and international organizations. When communities become experienced and confident enough to feel a sense of ownership, they will completely take over management of the centres. The main role of APPEAL is to help develop the management capacity of community people as well as local professionals through various training programs ...”* (Torres, 2003, pp.152-158)

The Integration of Literacy in ABE

There are at least two levels important to the integration of literacy for adults. One is its place within a wider adult basic education policy framework. Stand-alone literacy now has rather few proponents and despite time-lag it appears to be giving way to more integrated approaches to learning and the acquisition of skills. At least the curriculum will embrace the application of literacy to situations and subjects of interest to learners, and is likely to include numeracy, perhaps social skills and more applied learning objectives which have some social and economic purposes, sometimes except in the more impoverished settings also basic literacy in IT.

Other outstanding issues demand further understanding and the trying out and evaluation of different approaches: for example literacy in a main national language versus initial literacy learning in one’s mother tongue. The arguments have swung back and forth between these two approaches, often confused by difference of value and ideology.

A more recent question concerns the need to learn an international language (in practice usually English but also other main European languages like French and Spanish in parts of Africa, Latin America and even Asia, and one may predict Chinese in due course, and of course Arabic). The argument runs that looking ahead, people will not be adequately ‘functionally literate’ to cope as global citizens if they do not have use of one of the main world languages. The recognition of literacy as a ‘moving target’ is perhaps only two decades old. The meaning of this phrase is itself evolving in the early years of this newly ‘global’ century.

No less challenging is the question raised earlier, that is the integration of all forms of adult literacy and basis education into other aspects of living and working. This is the challenge presented by lifelong learning, and expressed first by the Faure report, and through OECD and other work at the same time, and then in the 1996 Delors Report. A lifelong learning poses deep questions about the nature of schooling and the curriculum – work systematically attempted by the Unesco Institute for Education in the seventies but little advanced since then, until the OECD and its Centre for Educational Research and Innovation began its

recent CERI Schools for the Future project. This lies outside the scope of this paper of adult learning, but the integration of all ABE into other arena of life and work is central.

In Bolivia it is the Ministry of Education that supports an infrastructure of some 500 adult education centres, with buildings and trained and paid teachers. Here integration means the opportunity for successful literacy participants to continue so that after years of successful studying, in most cases combined with vocational training, an advanced school leaver's certificates can be achieved. (www.iiz-dvv.de)

A provisional conclusion from reviewing the evidence of research studies and evaluations so far is that the more such integration occurs, the more successful and sustained the learning and its use are likely to be. On the other hand, the further 'integration' moves out beyond the world of the Education Ministry, the (trained) teacher and the classroom, the harder it becomes to plan and manage it. This may be a main if largely unrecognised reason why governments and inter-governmental agencies vacillate between embracing and neglecting adult literacy and ABE. Not only does it get very messy to pursue an education policy through a dozen ministries rather than one or two. It also calls for different confidence and skills on the part of teachers whose training and maybe motivation are limited; and it implies a change to the quasi-monopoly over education and even learning that education systems have been conceded in 'modern' societies and times. Moving into an inclusive lifelong learning era where adult learning is well integrated and effective also means going back to rediscover ways in which responsibility for learning was more widely shared in places beyond the classroom.

However, integration by itself is not a panacea for all the problems ahead. It neither automatically resolves all the issues of separated and sectoral approaches lacking coherence, nor does it in itself provide all the special attention and support which unbalanced social and gender disparities ask for in reaching policy decisions.

Bridging between Non-Formal and Formal Adult Education

The relationship, links and bridges between formal and non-formal education for adults are often complex, varying between and within countries. Bridging commonly remains unsatisfactory and hard to resolve.

Part of the difficulty derives from conceptual and linguistic confusion. The earlier typology distinguishing informal (learning) from non-formal and formal (education) has gone out of favour, partly because of the important distinction between education and learning. The term non-formal education is used in different ways and its scope is more or less broad; sometimes to do with the

setting and context of learning, sometimes to do with the methods employed, sometimes mainly relating to whether the work is assessed for credit.

The subject of bridging should be seen and approached from the viewpoint of the learner, with the idea of getting across from one kind of level of learning to another which has different kinds of requirements. Learning in a relaxed, familiar and informal environment – which might be a family setting, a village hall, or in another situation and country in a local college rather than a big more distant institution – can enable a person new to study and low in self-confidence to find their way and gain the ability to take on more difficult work at a more advanced level of complexity. Good bridging arrangements will allow people to move from quite informal adult community learning (ACL) into more formal settings where what is learned can be certified and accredited, and thus acquires in some sense a formal market value. Despite all the critiques of the under-resourced formal sector of education, it should be noted that often the non-formal sector is much worse off; good bridging arrangements could support the weaker sector, and maybe some of its flexibility would cross over.

The difficulty about education systems (some even say the territorial imperialism of organised education) that is mentioned in respect of integration, above, applies also where the rules and requirements of formal systems place barriers across the bridges that learners need to cross.

Almost without exception education systems and institutions are protective of what they offer, not only within the sector but also in their own part and even, in the case of universities, their own institution, and unwilling to give ‘credit where credit’s due’, for learning achieved in other places and ways. On the one hand there are excellent and successful access, taster, confidence-building and preparatory programmes for adult learners in many countries, wealthy and developing. These may be ‘outreach’ from the formal sector institution, or provided by a third sector organisation or even an enterprise for its workers. With care and patience, arrangements, usually on a specific and local basis, may be negotiated which ensure that those completing an agreed and recognised programme of study are able to move into the formal sector and continue their study with or without some formal recognition or ‘advanced standing’.

The related matters of recognition and accreditation of prior and experiential learning have consumed much energy for two decades and more, but little progress seems to have been made. Pathways and bridges may have been prepared; but if formal educational credit is involved progress is still very slow. The cost in time, morale and outlay both to the individual and to the public exchequer (whatever form this takes) is probably very high, although we lack the tools and resources to measure it.

At a local and informal level much community-based learning, and learning in family settings across generations, is demonstrably successful in societies from the most to the least impoverished. It may however be not in the least ‘joined up’, formal adult education belonging with a Ministry department of that name while

work-based and community (development) learning are the responsibility of quite other Ministries.

The HIV/AIDS learnership programme in South Africa could be seen as a case in point to demonstrate acceptance and credibility. It is an important initiative in adult education to reduce the disastrous social and economic impact of the virus on urban and rural communities by training caregivers on a larger scale. Real success however will only be possible if this training shall find acceptance of the South African Qualification Authority, and shall be in line with the Ancillary Health Care Qualification, thereby accrediting training within informal and adult learning for the health, welfare and education sectors (Diallo et.al., 2004, pp. 172-173).

Achieving full recognition, and creating accessible and well used bridges, has some way to go. So far it has been perhaps more of an evident problem in the North where it features more in the literature; but like lifelong learning, the need is universal, and its importance is likely to grow as non-formal approaches are adopted wherever the formal sector fails to reach out.

ABE and Disadvantage

Arguing earlier for better integration of all the sub-sectors of education into one system of lifelong learning opportunities, there is also the need for avoiding undesired side-effects in processes in educational reform, like when changing the vocational education training (VET) in the context of economic transformation or globalisation.

A consequence of this lack of adequate policy integration in recent VET reform agendas, is their perceived tendency to create newly marginalized sectors of society, while addressing their specific target concerns. Various in the countries studied, we see concern for the increasing marginalisation of older adults made redundant by workplace reform, of individuals who do not fit the formal definitions of disadvantage or sectoral responsibility that are used in operationalizing the reforms, of adults who are not responsive to the contemporary individualisation of teaching and learning ... Frequently overlooked or marginalized in the enthusiasm for VET reform has been its impact on gender equity. There is a concern, then, that recent policy reforms may actually be regressive in their effects, particularly on women and their access to VET and to work on a non-discriminatory basis. (Bagnall, 2003, p.149)

Naturally, especially in the less impoverished societies adult literacy and basic education are mainly about the more disadvantaged and marginalised communities and categories of people. In some developing countries the main interest is almost unavoidably in large-scale wide-reaching programmes that will make a mark in terms of key targets and indicators of the kind used by EFA, and in the Millennium Development Goals. As basic literacy rates rise there is a tendency to attend more to particular categories of need, often measured in

terms of (il)literate rates but in recent years also by a bigger basket of social, health and economic indicators.

The policy discourse and focus thus shifts in two related yet distinct directions.

One is to identify and 'target' the different disadvantages of different groups and seek means to assist them through education (formal or non-formal) into more effective inclusion, usually with skills that will make them employable. In these focused settings there is likely to be integration of literacy into ABE and with an eye to points of entry into the mainstream of economy and society relevant to that group and country. In the more wealthy countries this disaggregation is very detailed, not just by age, gender, ethnicity and location (eg. rural remote, inner city) but including for example prisoners and former prisoners, drug users, HIV/AIDS sufferers, the long-term unemployed, and a host of different specific physical and mental disabilities. Such programmes are by nature more closely tailored to the circumstances of different people with learning needs, compared with the mass literacy programmes that dominated earlier decades. For some categories of 'disadvantage with stigma' there may be an element of compulsion if not punishment for non-participation.

Somewhat special cases are interesting experiences in countries of the former socialist countries as for a long time it was a given understanding that there was no longer adult illiteracy. Now, with a new openness and visibility, there are programmes for adult literacy in prisons in Russia (Agapova, 2005, p. 2), and in Bulgaria literacy work for Roma communities are part of social integration via second chance schools. (IIZ/DVV, 2003, pp. 41-42)

The other direction lies in seeking to combat and to reduce or eliminate poverty - like literacy, another problematic 'moving target' as definitions, standards, and expectations change. Adult Education in its various forms has been marshalled in the war against poverty for decades rather than years, with varying success. The causal chain is much longer than for quickly demonstrated elements of literacy, and the links for proof that adult learning reduced poverty are more numerous and extended.

There are interesting findings in a report on *Enhancing income generation through adult education – a Comparative Study* towards the need for better integration of the 'formal', here in this case for the vocational education and training sector, and the 'non-formal', as the case studies "reveal a relationship between the level of social disadvantage through cultural marginalisation, and the strength of the non-government organisation (NGO) sector in nonformal education. The NGO sector is strongest and most important in providing nonformal education under conditions of, and with societal groups most adversely affected by, serious social disadvantage. This relationship is strongly evidenced, for example, in the Philippine case study, where state provision tends to be concentrated on mainstream provision, while a strong NGO sector is focused on disadvantaged groups." (Bagnall, 2003, p.143) The main point to note here is the need to find conducive ways for government to support the NGO

sector in non-formal education, also active in adult literacy, and maybe not only for the disadvantaged but more generally because of their greater flexibility and closeness to the people.

There is at times also a tension between tackling poverty as the core purpose, and preferring to treat education as a more independent purpose and activity – as an end or a good in itself – not closely connected with the macro-economic and social poverty agenda. For some civil society organisations the war against poverty is best waged by ‘empowering’ the disadvantaged, ‘conscientising’ them into recognising and demanding their rights. From this perspective poverty is best tackled less in partnership with government than by challenging unequal distribution as a cause of poverty.

The diversity of strategies and stories reflects the diversity of situations. While it is evident that no one approach or size fits all, the implications for embedding adult learning within wider development policies, and for extending the purpose and scope from literacy alone, through literacy in context to serve job-skill acquisition, to a more holistic and contextualised community advancement approach, is clear.

Conclusion - Overall Appraisal

...adult education and learning has not received the attention which it deserves in major education reforms and in recent international drives to eliminate poverty, achieve gender justice, provide education for all and foster sustainable development. Our Midterm Review of the worldwide situation of adult education and learning – conducted thematically, globally, regionally, nationally and locally by governments, non-governmental and civil-society organisations, engaged networks, social movements and other partners – has, in fact, revealed a disturbing regression in the field. (Recommitting..., A Call for Action, p.18)

Within these data, it was clear that adult education represents a huge variety of learning experiences... This Follow Up Report specifically watched how governments addressed the access of disadvantaged groups to learning opportunities. Around the world, it is clear that simply stating that equal opportunities exist for all does not ensure equal participation from all. This is so because complex patterns of discrimination act as powerful obstacles to access. These patterns act both through cultural messages given by society and through personal subordinated attitudes. Therefore if educational opportunities are to reach all groups which are discriminated against, then specific obstacles to access must be identified and programmes organised in response to them. (ICAE, 2003, pp.16-17)

There have been cycles over recent decades of seeing adult education and adult literacy as central to development, and part of mainstream educational planning and provision, interspersed with phases in which almost all attention is paid to

the education of children, and adults' learning is largely neglected. We are in such a phase at present. It caused such slogans as 'Education for All Adults' at CONFINTEA V+6, opposed to EFA as 'Except for Adults'.

This periodic amnesia about adults is destructive both of sustained commitment to a holistic lifelong learning approach and ultimately to the success of school-based literacy, and basic education for the young. Leading IGOs such as Unesco and the World Bank carry a particular responsibility for setting the tone of policy in this respect. Developing countries tend to amplify what are seen as the priorities and preferences of these influential bodies.

The resulting periodic dichotomy plays off school age against adult learning destructively. It tends to be exacerbated by strongly target-driven and implicitly competitive modes of planning.

International agencies and major conferences are to be commended for seeking to raise aspiration and to tie participating countries to achieving challenging targets. On the other hand the wish to succeed against targets has unintended consequences, ranging from stretching and bending the data for purposes of presentation, to taking short cuts, and excluding other essential initiatives which give the work meaning for participants and hence sustainability, where these aspects are not explicitly included in the criteria.

Simple participation numbers and short-term outcome attainments are notorious in this respect. The literacy and other skills addressed by targets may be quickly lost, without incentive and support to sustain and use what has been learned in any real life situation.

These unfortunate features of global target-setting and comparison may have moderated with experience but they remain problematic. Also, as the cycle for achieving public targets approaches completion (eg. 2000, 2015) there is a tendency towards impatience, and a greater temptation to seek short-term ways of increasing numbers which have little chance of giving abiding value.

In this perspective the challenge for adult literacy in EFA is to seek closer integration of educational endeavour in cross-cutting initiatives and targets between different sectors, and better to target especially excluded and unemployed women and men. It is also important to integrate specific literacy and learning efforts into different industrial and workplace policies and settings, and into health, women's, families and other policy and community arenas of policy and practice, so that learning is anchored within diverse lifelong and life-wide activity. Such a more ambitious, radical and longer-term approach will prepare the way for the more equitable and inclusive lifelong learning policy intentions which should be the common aspirations of countries in both the North and the South.

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